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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/615,196	07/07/2003	Brian E. Dalton	4384	8029

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EXAMINER	
DAVIS, DANIEL J	
ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
3731	

DATE MAILED: 09/24/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/615,196

Applicant(s)

DALTON, BRIAN E.

Examiner

D. Jacob Davis

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 09 June 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-12 and 26-38 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 26-38 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1,3-5 and 7-11 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☒ Claim(s) 2,6 and 12 is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☒ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date 7/7/03, 12/15/03.

- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

Restriction to one of the following inventions is required under 35 U.S.C. 121:

- I. Claims 1-12, drawn to an implant assembly, classified in class 606, subclass 60.
- II. Claims 26-38, drawn to a plate assembly and insertion tool, classified in class 606, subclass 61.

The inventions are distinct, each from the other because of the following reasons:

Inventions Group I and Group II are related as subcombination and combination, respectively. Inventions in this relationship are distinct if it can be shown that (1) the combination as claimed does not require the particulars of the subcombination as claimed for patentability, and (2) that the subcombination has utility by itself or in other combinations (MPEP § 806.05(c)). In the instant case, the combination as claimed does not require the particulars of the subcombination as claimed because the combination does not require a passage. The subcombination has utility by itself, since the device may be implanted by hand.

Because these inventions are distinct for the reasons given above and have acquired a separate status in the art as shown by their different classification, restriction for examination purposes as indicated is proper.

During a telephone conversation with Floyd Carothers on September 6, 2004 a provisional election was made without traverse to prosecute the invention of Group I, claims 1-12. Affirmation of this election must be made by applicant in replying to this

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Office action. Claims 26-38 are withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner, 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claims 1, 3-5, 7-9 and 11 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,129,899 to Small et al. In Fig. 1, Small discloses a first screw receiving socket element 35 having a screw shank passage and a screw head seat 42. Fig. 3 illustrates a second socket element 35. The first and second socket elements 35 may slide over the arm/plate 17 when the protruding arms 39 and 40 are not fully positioned within Small's teeth 27 and 28. The arm 17 extends from the first socket element beyond the second socket element. The device further comprises a nut 31. The nut has protuberances (internal threads) on the bottom of the device, which protuberances engage the screw head. Fig. 1B illustrates that the screw is engaging the edges of the slot.

The nut 31 may also be considered a lock assembly or a locking cap, which prevents movement of the two socket elements 35. The socket elements further comprise a socket bowl 42. There is a slot between the arms of the plate. There is an outside corner on both sides of the plate where the bone contact surface and the

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outside surface meet. These two corners are considered edges and taper towards one another at the leading end of the plate, as required in claim 9.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claim 10 is rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Small in view of U.S. Publication 2001/0037111 to Dixon et al. Small discloses a straight plate. Nevertheless, Dixon teaches in col. 1, lines 21-23 a plate that may be "curved or shaped to allow for stabilizing the spine or positioning individual vertebra as required." Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to make the plate curved "to allow for stabilizing the spine or positioning individual vertebra as required."

Allowable Subject Matter

Claims 2, 6 and 12 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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Conclusion

The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure: U.S. Patent No. 6,290,703 to Ganem, U.S. Patent No. 5,540,690 to Miller et al. and U.S. Publication 2003/0045875 to Bertranou et al.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to D. Jacob Davis whose telephone number is (703) 305-1232. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Anhtuan T. Nguyen can be reached on (703) 308-2154. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

DJD


DAVID O. REIP
PRIMARY EXAMINER